

Local content diminishes with consolidation

25 years ago when I started in broadcasting there were many owners, great competition, and a passion among those in the business to serve the public.

Since consolidation began in the mid-90's I have seen that drastically change. Now there are only a small handful of owners, competition is limited to just between the three or four "station groups" that own most of the market and the top concern is not serving the public, but serving the bottom line.

Profits are important. They are the life blood of any business. But profits are a means to serve the goal of serving the public. When profits become the only goal of a business, the public is not served.

When dealing with a scarce resource such as the broadcast airwaves, serving the public needs to be the ultimate goal, not making as much money as possible.

In the name of profits I have seen the quality and quantity of local content reduced drastically. What passes for local programming is often a newscast that rarely does more than repeat the morning newspaper and show live pictures of fires and crime scenes. Increasingly those newscasts are not even produced in the local market as Sinclair and other group owners consolidate production to broadcast hubs hundreds of miles away from the market.

As the FCC considers Docket No. 02-277, The Biennial Review of the FCC's broadcast media ownership rules I urge you to retain all of the current media ownership rules now in question. These rules serve the public interest by limiting the market power of already huge companies in the broadcast industry.

I do not believe that the studies commissioned by the FCC accurately demonstrate the negative affects media deregulation and consolidation have had on media diversity. While there may be indeed be more sources of media than ever before, the spectrum of views presented have become more limited.

The right to carry on informed debate and discussion of current events is part of the founding philosophy of our nation. Our forefathers believed that democracy was best served by a diverse marketplace of ideas. If the FCC allows our media outlets to merge, our ability to have open, informed discussion with a wide variety of viewpoints will be compromised.

The public interest will best be served by preserving media ownership rules in question in this proceeding.

In addition to the official hearing on this matter in Richmond, VA, I strongly urge the FCC to hold additional hearings elsewhere around the nation to solicit the widest possible participation from the public which will be the most directly affected by the outcomes of these decisions. I think it is important for the FCC to not only consider the points of view of those with a financial interest in this issue, but also those with a social or civic interest.

With the serious impact these rule changes will have on our democracy, it

is incumbent on the Commission to take the time to review these issues more thoroughly and allow the American people to have a meaningful say in the process.

Thank you,

Mike McIntee